

**MOOD AND PERSONALITY PREDICTORS OF POLITICAL  
PREFERENCE/AFFILIATION**

An Undergraduate Research Scholars Thesis

by

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## **ABSTRACT**

### **Mood and Personality Predictors of Political Preference/Affiliation**

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In general, young voters are notorious for not taking part in the political processes. The aim of the present study is to investigate the role that mood and selected personality variables play in political affiliations amongst college students. Subjects were asked to select their political preference/affiliation from the following six categories: Conservative Republican, Moderate Republican, Conservative Democrat, Liberal Democrat, Libertarian, and no political preference/affiliation. To measure mood and personality variables of our subjects, we used the following scales: NEO Personality Inventory (NEO-PI), and Right Wing Authoritarianism Scale (RWA-ACS). Participants were 114 undergraduates (40 males; 72 females; one not sure; one no gender indication) who were asked to indicate political affiliation and completed the NEO-PI Big-Five and the RWAS. SAS procedures were employed to conduct a MANOVA comparing political affiliation groups on the NEO-PI Big-Five and RWAS measures. The RWAS Aggression scale, the RWAS Conventionalism scale and the RWAS Submission scale all proved highly significant. Conservative Republicans scored significantly higher on aggression than did the Moderate Republicans, the Conservative Democrats, the Liberal Democrats, the Libertarians and those proclaiming no political affiliation. Conservative Republicans scored significantly lower on RWAS conventionalism than did the Moderate Republicans, the Conservative

Democrats, the Liberal Democrats, the Libertarians and those proclaiming no political affiliation. Conservative Republicans were significantly more Submissive higher than the Moderate Republicans, the Conservative Democrats, the Liberal Democrats, the Libertarians, and those proclaiming no political affiliation. Significant differences were found for the NEO-PI Big-Five Openness scale with the Conservative Republicans scoring significantly lower on Openness than did the Liberal Democrats; the Libertarians and those proclaiming no political affiliation. Moderate Republicans were significantly lower than those having no political affiliation. These analyses demonstrated there was a significant interaction between the three RWA scales and political preference/affiliation. These findings enhance our understandings of young voters and may ultimately contribute to better participation on their part in the political process.

## **ACKNOWLEDGMENTS**

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# **CHAPTER I**

## **INTRODUCTION**

With the upcoming presidential election in 2016, there is a growing interest in voting patterns and political affiliations. Of particular interest in the present research is the relationship between political affiliations and voting patterns as it relates to young voters. In general, young voters are notorious for not taking part in the political processes. The objective of this research project was to investigate how mood and personality predict political preference/affiliation amongst college students.

### **Political psychology**

The following studies show how broadly the relationship of psychology and politics are interwoven. These studies cover a variety of concepts that show just how much psychology can impact the way we look and think about politics and vice versa. Gawronski, Galdi, and Arcuri (2015) investigated if implicit measures could be useful to identify distal sources of political preferences in areas where social desirability may bias self-reports. Through their research they found that even though there were studies that have shown implicit measures couldn't capture thoughts and feelings that are outside conscious awareness, implicit measures are shown to have lower susceptibility to strategic influences that can help overcome bias and social desirability (Gawronski, et al., 2015, p. 3). These findings suggest that the use of implicit measures will be quite useful for research on socially sensitive topics, such as the connection between racial attitudes and political preferences (Gawronski, et al., 2015, p. 4). Gawronski et al. (2015) also looked at how implicit measures of regular political attitudes could help predict biases in the way

people process decision-relevant information that are hard to predict with explicit measures.

Studies found that by using implicit measures of party preference can contribute to the prediction of future political choices of individuals that identify politically undecided (Hawkins & Nosek, 2012; Galdi, Gawronski, Arcuri, & Frieze, 2012). The significance of these findings is supported by a growing body of research shows how implicit measures better predict real-world political behavior than explicit measure but they can also be a useful supplement to improve the prediction of election outcomes (Gawronski, et al., 2015, p. 14).

Caprara and Zimbardo (2004) explored this undeniable shift in modern politics that has become quite personalized, the individual characteristics and values of voters and candidates gain salience. Their research assessed the relative contributions to political choices made by traits, by a standard set of demographic values and by personal values (Caprara, Schwartz, Capanna, Vecchione, & Barbaranelli 2004). They found that traditional demographics had no utility in differentiating among voters but they did find that both traits and values did prove to be effective predictors of political choices made (Caprara & Zimbardo, 2004, p. 588-589). These findings suggest how informative the role of personal values and traits have in voters' political choices. In an earlier study (Caprara, Barbaranelli & Zimbardo, 2002) assessing personality of voters and their perception of politicians found a greater similarity between voters' personality and their appraisals of politicians of their preferred party than with their appraisals of politicians of the opposite party. These findings show that the personality characteristics may be critical to strengthening the bond between voters, parties and politicians (Caprara & Zimbardo, 2004, p. 586). The overall findings can contribute to the democratization of the entire political process by

enabling citizens to have a higher sense of control and responsibility over their complex and constantly changing political environment (Caprara & Zimbardo, 2004, p. 591).

Kaniasty and Jakubowska (2014) examined the psychological impact of global subjective appraisals of influence exerted on people's lives by common political events (p. 751). The results of their study revealed that political events have a direct negative impact on individuals' assessments of their psychological well-being (Kaniasty & Jakubowska, 2014, p.761). The research also documents that among people who see themselves and their communities to be marginalized the psychological impact of ordinary political stressors is particularly pronounced (Kaniasty & Jakubowska, 2014, p. 763-764). Constant awareness of the negative influence political stressors has on one's life had the potential to affect psychological and social functioning that extends past the most dramatic political circumstances (Kaniasty & Jakubowska, 2014, p. 763).

Cole and Sabik (2010) investigated if the desirable and undesirable dimensions of femininity had independent and interactive effects on Black and White women's political efficacy and participation (Cole & Sabik, 2010, p. 508). They conducted two studies surveying the same group of women who were in their 40's and then again in their 60's. They found that political efficacy was related to femininity for both Black and White women who were in their 40's, also the women who weren't burdened by the undesirable dimensions of femininity were related to feelings one could make a political impact, while women who were burdened by the undesirable dimensions reported the lowest levels of political efficacy (Cole & Sabik, 2010, p. 515-516). By the time the women entered their 60's, femininity was related to both political participation and



political efficacy. These findings suggest that as women age they gain some freedom from the oppressive aspects of femininity that support paternalistic stereotypes of women (Cole & Sabik, 2010, p. 516). Understanding both dimensions of femininity will help reconcile the critiques that femininity in anyway limits or disqualifies women to participate in the political realm (Cole & Sabik, 2010, p. 517). This understanding would be very important for the political mobilization of women to be more active and represented in all aspects of politics.

Sidanius, Pratto, and Bobo (1994) examined the relationship between sex-gender and social dominance theory (SDO), in that whether men have significantly higher SDO scores than women and if this difference appears to be robust and invariant across cultural and situational factors, such as: national origin, gender-role attitudes, ethnicity, religious belief, income level, education level, political ideology, racism, and age (Sidanius, et al., 1994, p. 998). The results supported both of their claims, the men did have significantly higher SDO levels than women and the male-female differences in SDO didn't show any systematic changes across cultural or situational factors (Sidanius, et al., 1994, p. 1008). These empirical results are also congruent with cross-cultural data showing men having higher levels of militarism, anti-egalitarianism, ethnocentrism, and political conservatism (Furnham, 1985; Marjoribanks, 1981; Sidanius & Ekehammar, 1980, 1982, 1983). Social dominance orientation is conceived to be a primary motive driving legitimizing myths and non-egalitarian social policies, therefore these gender-linked differences on SDO levels might help explain the gender differences on such things as support for war, the military, intergroup violence, and social welfare programs (Pratto et al., 1993). This research is important not merely for understanding the magnitude of the effect but also for understanding

politics, relations between the sexes, and intergroup relations in general (Sidanius, et al., 1994, p. 999).

Thórisdóttir and Jost (2011) investigated the possibility that situational manipulations of perceived threat would increase motivated closed-mindedness and the individual's affinity for political conservatism, in comparison with non-threatened individuals (Thórisdóttir & Jost, 2011, p. 792). The results from their study supported their claims that motivated closed-mindedness mediates the relationship between threat and political conservatism (Thórisdóttir & Jost, 2011, p. 805). They also found that a causal relationship exists between the experience of threat and the need to reduce uncertainty, with an end result of increased conservatism (Thórisdóttir & Jost, 2011, p. 805). It is clear from this study that threat affects epistemic motivation and spears to temporarily alter one's social and political attitudes (Thórisdóttir & Jost, 2011, p. 806).

Past research has already identified several individual difference and situational variables that influence political intolerance. Crawford and Pilanski (2014) focus on one individual difference, ideological attitude dimension of social dominance orientation (SDO) (SDO; Pratto, Sidanius, Stallworth, & Malle, 1994; Sidanius & Pratto, 1999), and situational variable, the probability that a target group will gain status, power, and influence (Gibson, 2006; Gibson & Gouws, 2003; Marcus et al., 1995; Stenner, 2005), that have been found to not influence political intolerance (Crawford & Pilanski, 2014, p. 558). Crawford and Pilanski argue that SDO will predict political intolerance only of targets with hierarchy-attenuating political objectives (Crawford & Pilanski, 2014, p. 558). The results of the study confirmed that SDO predicted political intolerance of groups with hierarchy-attenuating political objectives but not in groups with

cohesive-reducing objectives, as well as Right-Wing Authoritarianism (RWA) predicted intolerance of groups with both hierarchy-attenuating and cohesive-reducing objectives (Crawford & Pilanski, 2014, p. 564). This research is significant because it is the first to show that motives to maintain existing status hierarchies can also lead to political intolerance (Crawford & Pilanski, 2014, p. 572). Nonetheless, it also enhances our understanding of political tolerance (Crawford & Pilanski, 2014, p. 574).

As past research has shown substantial evidence for the associations between individual's basic values and behavior (Bardi & Schwartz, 2003; Schwartz, 2006). Vecchione, Caprara, Dentale, and Schwartz (2013) address the issue of to what extent does values and political choices influence each other (p. 465). Prior research has made it clear that political choices influence core political values (McCann, 1997); it's also shown that basic values influence political choices (Schwartz, Caprara, & Vecchione, 2010), but it is less clear if political choices reciprocally influence basic values (Vecchione, et al., 2013, p. 466). They found that both of their studies replicated the earlier findings of a reciprocal causal relationship between voting and core political values but voting had no effect on basic personal values (Vecchione, et al., 2013, p. 481). They also found that the reciprocal relationship between voting and core political values is mediated by left-right ideological placement (Vecchione, et al., 2013, p.481). This research adds to extant literature on the relation between values and voting (Vecchione, et al., 2013, p.481). These eight studies all show how a variety of political topics such as, voting behavior, party affiliations, political intolerance, political conservatism, gender differences, political participation, etc., are assessed from a new perspective lens, psychology.

### **NEO personality inventory (NEO-PI) scale**

Methodical efforts to organize the taxonomy of personality began shortly after William McDougall, 20<sup>th</sup> century psychologist, who wrote that, “Personality may to advantage be broadly analyzed into five distinguishable but separate factors, namely intellect, character, temperament, disposition, and temper . . .” Raymond Cattell, British and American psychologist, developed a relatively complex taxonomy of individual differences about 10 years later. This consisted of 16 primary factors and 8 second-order factors. Unfortunately, repeated attempts by researchers to replicate his work were unsuccessful and, in each case, researchers found that a 5-factor model accounted for the data extremely well. The correlations reported by Cattell and Fiske were reanalyzed and it was found that there was strong support for five factors: Surgency, Emotional Stability, Agreeableness, Dependability, and Culture. These factors were remarkably similar to those, which are generally accepted by researchers today.

The NEO Personality Inventory (NEO-PI), created by Paul Costa and Robert McCrae, is a measure of the five major dimensions of normal personality traits that has demonstrated its utility for research applications. It embodies a conceptual model that distills decades of factor analytic research on the structure of personality. By a combination of rational and factor analytic methods, the scales themselves have been developed and refined. A series of publications shows evidence of scale reliability, correlation with other inventories and observer ratings, and construct validity in the prediction of theoretically relevant criteria. Although we collected data from college students using this scale in a classroom setting, other data also suggest that it has potential for use in clinical, industrial, and educational settings. The five broad dimensions include Openness to Experience, Conscientiousness, Extraversion, Agreeableness, and Neuroticism (OCEAN). Each of these factors is broad and consists of a range of more specific

traits. For example, the broad dimension of Extraversion encompasses more specific traits such as talkative, energetic, and assertive.

The Big Five structure was derived from statistical analyses of which traits tend to co-occur in people's descriptions of themselves or other people. The underlying correlations are based on chance and exceptions are possible. For example, you could imagine someone who is assertive yet not very talkative. However, many studies show that people who are talkative are typically assertive and vice versa. This is why they are shown together under the broader Extraversion factor. While the five dimensions do not capture the idiosyncrasies of everyone's personality, the Big Five still serves as a valid and useful framework. This framework aids in giving us a better understanding of general components of personality that seem to be the most important in our social and interpersonal interactions with others. Above all, it is important to note the many aspects of personality that are not included within the Big Five. Motivations, emotions, attitudes, abilities, self-concepts, social roles, autobiographical memories, and life stories are just a few of the additional units that personality psychologists consider. While some of these other units may have theoretical or empirical relationships with the Big Five traits, they are conceptually distinct. For this reason, even a very comprehensive profile of someone's personality traits can only be seen as a partial description of their overall personality. Since the Big Five taxonomy serves an integrative function, it provides a starting place for vigorous research and theorizing that can eventually lead to an explication and revision of the descriptive taxonomy in causal and dynamic terms.

The NEO-PI measures three broad domains, which include Neuroticism, Extraversion and Openness. In addition, there are significant gaps in the three domain NEO model. In their analyses of the English language, Norman, Goldberg, and other others, showed two clusters of adjectives that describe aspects of personality not related to N, E, or O. Terms such as cooperative, trusting, and sympathetic define a domain they call Agreeableness (A); words such as punctual, responsible, and hardworking suggest a domain they called Conscientiousness (C). Scales to measure these two subdomains were therefore developed, and research has demonstrated that the new scales correlate highly with adjective factors measuring A and C. Facets for these domains have not yet been clearly identified, and no facet scales are provided in the NEO-PI. It is important to note that these dimensions are not also considered “types” of personalities. A person’s personality is the combination of each of their Big Five personality characteristics. For example, a person may be very sociable (high Extraversion), easily stressed (low Emotional Stability), not very friendly (low Agreeableness), hard working (high Conscientiousness), and extremely creative (high Intellect). Each of the five major dimensions includes global domains and particular aspects. Openness assesses proactive seeking and appreciation of experience for its own sake. It also measures toleration for and exploration of the unfamiliar. For example, a person who scores high on Openness would possess characteristics such as curiosity, creativity, and originality and would most likely be extremely imaginative and untraditional. In contrast, a person who scores low on Openness would be more conventional, down-to-earth, unartistic, unanalytical, and would possess narrow interests. Facets of Openness include fantasy, aesthetics, feelings, actions, ideas, and values. Next, having Conscientiousness serve as one of the five major dimensions will assess the individual’s degree of organization, persistence, and motivation in goal-directed behavior and contrasts dependable, fastidious people

with those who are lackadaisical and sloppy. It ultimately measures one's level of organization and work ethic. One who possesses characteristics such as organized, reliable, hard working, self-disciplined, punctual scrupulous, neat, ambitious, and persevering would likely be a high scorer of Conscientiousness. One who possesses characteristics such as aimless, unreliable, lazy, careless, lax, negligent, weak-willed, and hedonistic would likely be a low scorer of Conscientiousness. Extraversion is the dimension, which assesses quantity and intensity of interpersonal interaction as well as activity level, need for stimulation, and capacity for joy. It measures one's level of sociability and enthusiasm. While a high scorer of Extraversion may possess characteristics such as sociable, active, talkative, person –oriented, and optimistic, and low scorer likely possesses characteristics more along the lines of reserved, sober, unexuberant, and quiet. Facets of Extraversion include warmth, gregariousness, assertiveness, activity, excitement-seeking, and positive emotions. Agreeableness is the dimension that assesses the quality of one's interpersonal orientation along a continuum from compassion to antagonism in thoughts, feelings and actions. It measures one's level of friendliness and kindness. Soft-hearted, good-natured, trusting, helpful, forgiving gullible and straightforward are all characteristics likely possessed by one who scores high in Agreeableness. In contrast, cynical, rude, suspicious, uncooperative, vengeful, ruthless, irritable, and manipulative would be characteristics possessed by one who scores low in Agreeableness. Lastly, Neuroticism is the dimension that assesses adjustments vs. emotional instability. It also identifies individuals prone to psychological distress, unrealistic ideas, excessive cravings or urges, and maladaptive coping responses. One who scores high in this dimension will most likely show characteristics of being nervous, emotional, insecure, inadequate, and hypochondriacally while one who scores low in this dimension will show characteristics of being clam, relaxed, unemotional, hardy, secure, and self-

satisfied. Facets of Neuroticism include anxiety, hostility, depression, self-consciousness, impulsiveness, and vulnerability. It is suggested by many years of research that personality is stable throughout life and associated with a range of important life outcomes. These outcomes range from academic and occupational success to marital stability and physical health.

Research involving both natural language adjectives and theoretically based personality questionnaires supports the comprehensiveness of model and justifies it to be applicable across observers and cultures. Since the Big Five has provided reliable results for so many other studies, it can be said that it has done the same for ours specifically. During the past decade, an impressive body of literature has accumulated, providing recognizable evidence for the powerful strength of the 5-factor model.

One study that was conducted in order to determine just how genetic factors influence vulnerability to depression used the NEO-PI to measure neuroticism. Since no specific genes have been definitely implicated, one promising approach was to determine what traits, such as personality factors, are associated with risk for depression. Luckily, neuroticism is one such trait that can be measured by the NEO personality inventory. It was found that a brain derived neurotrophic factor (BDNF) coding variant is associated with the NEO Personality Inventory Domain Neuroticism, which, as stated previously, is a risk factor for depression. Those who scored high on the Neuroticism domain are characterized by frequent experience of “negative emotionality” such as anxiety, low mood, and hostility. The converging lines of evidence point to BDNF as a factor in the pathophysiology of depression. By studying a community sample of



441 subjects and collecting data from these subjects using the NEO-PI, they were able further provide evidence and one possible mechanism linking BDNF to depression.

In addition, the NEO-PI has often been used in Industrial/Organizational Psychology. For the past 25 years, many researchers have investigated the validity of personality measures for the use of evaluating and selecting employees. Overall, the conclusion drawn from these studies is that the validity of personality as a predictor of job performance is substantially low. This is a result of having no well-accepted taxonomy existing for classifying personality traits at the time these studies were conducted. Thankfully, in the past 10 years, the views of many personality psychologists have come together, creating a much better structure and understanding of personality. Researchers have generally agreed on five, strong factors of personality, previously referred to as the “Big Five”. Dr. Paul T. Costa, Jr. an American Psychologist who is associated with the Big Five Factor Model, is perhaps best known for his revision of the NEO Personality Inventory (NEO-PI-R). He and McCrae have argued that personality is stable, especially after age 30, that it is universal, that the core structure consists of five major domains, and that these in turn reflect a facet-based structure. Costa has also argued that personality is an important influence on behavior, including longevity and health. In both research and applied samples, the NEO-PI-R has shown evidence of reliability and validity. Several studies suggest that it has utility in the prediction of job performance. This is linked to the idea that personality traits are pervasive styles of thinking, feeling, and behaving, therefore they are likely to affect vocational interests and choices, work styles, job satisfaction, and the effectiveness of job performance. After being out of fashion in academic research for a good amount of time, a renewed enthusiasm for personality traits and the value of personality assessment came about when the

discovery of the five-factor model occurred. It provides a comprehensive framework for the organization of occupationally relevant personality traits. In addition, the importance of the five factors for work performance have been made clear through meta-analyses using the Big Five structural model.

### *Big five robustness*

Our study has focused on how personality predicts political preferences and affiliations using the Big 5. The increasing interest in politics in light of controversial presidential elections, healthcare reforms, and other areas of public policy has initiated a popular new interest in research involving politics itself. However, the Big 5 has rarely been used to assess how personality predicts politics, much less how it predicts political preferences. Based on the previous observation one might conclude that our study cannot be considered significant because it may not have the evidence to prove its results are reliable. This might be acceptable if it weren't for the fact that the Big 5 has been used in extremely broad areas of research. Our argument, in favor of the accuracy of the Big 5, is simply that it has been successfully used in essentially all areas of research. Hence, there is no reason to speculate that the Big 5 does not accurately convey our findings due to lack of extensive previous research on our specific topic.

Some diverse areas of previous research that we have decided to focus on for this section involving the Big 5 includes the following: Academic Performance, Gender, Social Networking, Genetics, and Childhood Education. Each area and some of the main conclusions will now be discussed in regard to how the Big 5 was used to assess personality.

1. *Genetics.* Jang, Livesley, Angleitner, Riemann, & Vernon (2002), conducted research that showed individual differences in almost all facets of the Big 5 factors can be accounted for through genetics and non-shared environmental factors. Plomin, DeFries, and McClearn (1990), estimated that, on average, 50% of individual differences in any given personality trait is due to genetics. In light of the previous stated research, Horsburgh, Schermer, Veselka, & Vernon (2009), conducted a similar study that set out to assess how much genetics and environmental factors contribute to individual differences in mental toughness. The participants consisted of same sex identical and unidentical twins. Their ages ranged from 18-22 years of age, and there was a total of 438 participants from all across North America. The measure used to assess mental toughness was the MT48 scale, and the measure used to assess personality was the Big 5. A questionnaire was also used to assess the physical similarity between the twins. The results of this study using the Big 5 factors of personality were consistent with the previously stated research. About 50% of the individual differences in all facets of the Big 5 personality factors found in this study were attributed to genetics. The Big-5 variables then went on to all have the expected significant correlations between the mental toughness variables. In conclusion, and in light of the use of the Big 5 in this study, genetics influences personality and personality was found to significantly influence mental toughness.
2. *Academic Performance.* Previous research has been done to show that personality accurately predicts academic performance in college students. The Big 5, and many other personality measures, has been used to research this prediction. When using the Big 5 specifically, conscientiousness has been found to positively and consistently predict academic

performance. Previous research also shows that there are obvious gender differences in personality traits. Nguyen, Allen, & Fraccastoro (2005), conducted a study that aimed to replicate the previously stated research using only the Big 5 as a measure of personality. They wanted to investigate the extent to which personality predicts academic performance and how gender interacts with the two. The participants were 368 graduate students enrolled in a business course at a U.S. University—their GPA's and course grades in a business class were their academic performance measures. Consistent with previous research, the main findings showed that conscientiousness was a prime factor aiding overall academic performance. The correlation between all students that concern emotional stability and GPA was zero. However, when analyzing gender, emotional stability was positively and significantly related to GPA among male students, but not among females. Thus, the latter finding replicates previous research that has found differences in personality factors among gender that contribute to academic performance and academic performance alone.

3. *Childhood Education.* Previous studies have demonstrated that teaching is not merely a cognitive or technical procedure but a complex, personal, social, set of embedded processes and practices that concern the whole person (Hamacheck, 1999; Oakes & Lipton, 2003; Britzman, 2003; Cochran-Smith, 2005; Olsen, 2008; Vorcapik 2012), conducted a study that examined the significance of Preschool teacher's personalities in early childhood education. The basis of interest for this particular research study was that previous research had mainly been done to study the competencies that future preschool teachers should, and not personality traits of current preschool teachers. In order to assess this new area of research in personality she conducted two personality tests: the Big 5 and a comparable personality

measure called Eysenck's Personality Questionnaire. The participants were 92 female preschool teachers. Overall, personality traits in both models showed equivalent results, essentially proving the accuracy of both measures. They both showed that the Preschool teacher's exhibited higher levels of extraversion, agreeableness, consciousness, openness to experience and social conformity than a normative sample that they were compared to in the study. Specifically, the preschool teachers scored higher on all of the Big 5 subscales than the normative sample, except on the neuroticism subscale, where they scored significantly lower. The latter finding is consistent with similar research that has been previously conducted because it confirms the expected desirable characteristics of preschool teachers within two well-known personality models.

4. *Social Networking.* A modern way of engaging in interpersonal communication is the use of social networking. Psychological research is being aimed at the specific behaviors that individuals engage in while using social networking sites. Previous research found differences among gender and personality in social networking. Specifically, individual differences have been shown to predict the extent to which individuals use the Internet for various activities. Muscanell and Guadagno (2011), performed a study that aimed to find out whether personality influenced social networking behaviors, via the Big 5, and how these behaviors interacted with gender. 238 undergraduate psychology students were given a demographic information survey and the Big 5 to assess gender, social networking behaviors, and personality. The results showed that personality factors of the Big 5 (extraversion, agreeableness, openness, and conscientiousness) did predict social networking behaviors. For example, extraversion predicted likelihood of posting photographs. The results also showed

that gender and personality did interact to predict specific social networking behaviors.

Specifically, agreeableness predicted the use of IM (instant messaging), so that women low in agreeableness reported using IM more often than women high in agreeableness. Overall, the results from the Big 5 produced by the college students in this study are comparable to previous research on personality for the typical student age range.

In conclusion, a few aspects of our study that are essentially similar to the areas of research will now be addressed.

The Big 5 is often used with other measures to make a general conclusion about a research topic. Our study couples the Big 5 and the Right Wing Authoritarian Scale to convey a broader spectrum of results in regard to political preferences. However, the Big 5 is often used on it's own in a complete research study to solely convey results that are dependent on the personality predictors of the Big 5. As one can assume, the Big 5 can be successfully used in a research study by itself or accompanied with other measures.

As stated and proven earlier, the Big 5 has been used in broad areas of research. It is worth mentioning that these broad areas of research are not the only broad aspects of uses when considering previous research done with the Big 5. Our study is strictly composed of college students from a single university. One can assume that our study, although not assessed in our survey, has a culturally diverse sample to some extent. A point of concern might be in questioning what types of similar populations have been incorporated into research done with the Big 5. Previous research involving similar participants would need to have been conducted in

order to assume that our results from the Big 5 are reliable. So, another point worth mentioning is that the Big 5 is used in many studies that involve college students in the U.S. and other parts of the world. Not only have studies been done with college students in relation to the Big 5, but they have been successfully conducted all around the world with participants that range in all ages. Our study assesses gender, as do many other studies using the Big 5. In contrast, there is research that uses the Big 5 that does not assess gender, and there is also research that particularly assesses one gender. As one can conclude, there has been a significant amount of diverse research done using the Big 5 to accurately predict personality.

### **Right-wing authoritarianism (RWA) scale**

Right-wing authoritarianism (RWA) is defined as both a personality and ideology that is studied within the realms of political, social, and personality psychology. In concern to the right-wing authoritarian person, they are described as: having a high degree of willingness to submit to authorities that they perceive as legitimate, adhering to the norms and conventions of society, holding value in uniformity (Stenner). It should also be said that right wing authoritarians are often hostile of those who do not adhere to societal norms and conventions. (Karen).

Historically, the foundations of RWA were set by the Canadian-American psychologist Bob Altemeyer; by adaptation and refinement of the authoritarian personality theory that was originally established by researchers Theodor W. Adorno, Else Frenkel-Brunswik, Daniel Levinson, and Nevitt Sanford (Adorno). The original authoritarian personality theory was adapted to only include three of the original: authoritarian submission, authoritarian aggression, and conventionalism (Altemeyer). On a psychometric level, the RWA scale is considered an improvement to its predecessor, the F-scale that was considered the original measure of

authoritarianism. In comparison to the F-scale, the RWA scale is equally balanced and contains an equal number of pro-authoritarian and anti authoritarian statements (Fodor).

Based off of culmination of previous research and work, RWA is now analyzed at the component level with focus on Altemeyer's three main components. However, older and longer versions of the RWA scale are still used. A 14-item scale has been developed based off of the components of authoritarian submission, authoritarian aggression, and conventionalism. The 14-item scale is separated into three sections; one for each component. Both the aggression and conventionalism components are attributed with four statements and the submission component correlating with six statements. Each statement is responded to on a scale of 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree) (Mavor).

It should be noted, not all authoritarians are conservative and not all conservatives are authoritarians. Based off use of the 14-item RWA scale, right-wing authoritarians have been able to be compared to the Big Five Personality Traits (Sibley). It has been discovered that authoritarians are measured as scoring lower on openness to experience and generally higher on conscientiousness (Palmer). There is a positive correlation between RWA and conscientiousness ( $r = .15$ ) and a negative correlation between RWA and openness to experience ( $r = -.36$ ) (Sibley). These trends spark interest in identifying other personality traits associated with political preference becoming the aim of the present study. To display the robust nature of the RWA scale several past studies will be discussed in the following paragraphs.



In a 2007 Italian study conducted by Rattazzi, et al. a shortened version of the RWA scale was used to examine the relationships between political preference, authoritarianism, and prejudice towards Islamic immigrants in Italy. The data was collected from 363 university students who completed a questionnaire comprised of the RWA scale but adapted to the Italian language. The final version included 32 items: 30 of the items came from Altemeyer's (1998) version and two items came from Altemeyer's (1996) version. It should be noted that in this study a 7-point scale was used ranging from -3 (totally disagree) to +3 (totally agree). Islamic prejudice was assessed on an 11-point scale with decadic steps ranging from 0 (totally against) to 100 (totally in favor). Political preference was assessed by use of a 100-millimeter graphic scale where individual scores were reported by the millimeter with 0 corresponding to extreme left and 100 corresponding to extreme right (Rattazzi). It was found that high authoritarianism scores were associated with right wing orientation (Rattazzi). Further, it was found that there was a stronger correlation between authoritarian scores and more blatant prejudice scores and political preference than conservatism (Rattazzi). In a second similar study, the shortened 14-item RWA scale was used to examine similar variables. The results of the second study reported similar results thus concluding that the 14-item RWA scale is valid and reliable and ultimately a good alternative in place of longer versions of the RWA scale (Rattazzi).

A 1994 Harvard study conducted by Pratto, et al. examined social dominance as a personality predictor for political preference; the RWA scale was one of the measures used as evaluation of authoritarianism. It was found that Altemeyer's 30-item RWA scale had good internal reliability ( $\alpha = .78$ ) and that authoritarianism positively correlated with political-economic conservatism ( $r = .31$ ) (Pratto). Although a good portion of the Pratto et al. study examines factors outside of the

realm that the present study holds interest in, it should still serve as an example of the reliable nature of the RWA scale as well as display the valid use of the RWA scale in the present study.

A 2008 study conducted at the University of Massachusetts by Janoff-Bulman et al. examined moral motivations in relation to several factors: approach, avoidance, and political orientation. Just as the previous study examined factors outside of the realm of the present study there are certain extraneous factors in the Janoff-Bulman study that will not be discussed. The RWA scale was used to investigate moral motive's relationship with individual differences measured in political preference. Aside from completion of the RWA scale, subjects were asked to complete a questionnaire indicating their approval or disapproval of several controversial contemporary issues: legal abortion, affirmative action in college admissions, gay marriage, an environmental tax on luxury cars and SUV's, stem cell research, the death penalty, pornography on the internet, government welfare programs for the poor, teaching creationism in the classroom, and tax cuts for the rich. It was found that right wing authoritarianism was strongly associated with political preference ( $r = .58, p < .001$ ) (Janoff-Bulman). It was also reported that RWA significantly predicted the two avoidance motives of self-restraint and social order while not predicting any approach motives (Janoff-Bulman).

Based off the examples of the studies mentioned it should be apparent that Altemeyer's RWA scale has been used in a variety of studies concerning political preferences. The results of the studies discussed show that the scale provides results that are both valid and reliable. The dimensions of aggression, submission, and conventionalism as identified by Altemeyer contribute to the robust nature of the scale allowing it to be applied to a range of topics.

Although no study discussed in this section directly mirrored the present study at hand, these studies contribute to further justification for the present study.

The significance of this study was to gain a better understanding of how mood and personality affect young student's political preferences/affiliations and attitudes about relevant controversial issues. It was originally anticipated that the results of this study could assist political analysts, politicians, and political strategic planners in understanding how personality and attitude plays a role in voter preferences/affiliations. The aim of the present study is to investigate the role that mood and selected personality variables play in political affiliations amongst college students. Therefore, the current study helps us understand how the relationship between political affiliations and voting patterns as it relates to young voters. In general, young voters are notorious for not taking part in the political processes. The objective of this research project was to investigate how mood and personality predict political preference/affiliation amongst college students.

## **CHAPTER II**

### **METHODS**

#### **Participants**

The participants included 114 undergraduate students attending Texas A&M University (40 males; 72 females; one not sure; one no gender indication). The present study will be administered to approximately 114 students at Texas A&M University who will be recruited from the classes taught by Dr. Arnold LeUnes, Sport Psychology and Abnormal Psychology.

#### **Measures and designs**

The participants were asked to indicate political affiliation (Conservative Republican, Moderate Republican, Conservative Democrat, Liberal Democrat, Libertarian, and no affiliation) and completed the NEO-PI Big-Five personality scale (B-F) and the Right-Wing Authoritarianism scale (RWAS). After the students complete the assessments, we analyzed the differences in personality, mood, and attitudes in relation to political preference/affiliations. Upon the analysis the political affiliation of the students broke down into 25 Conservative Republicans, 32 Moderate Republican, 10 Conservative Democrat, 13 Liberal Democrat, 7 Libertarian, 26 None, and 1 no indication. The NEO Personality Inventory (NEO-PI) will be administered to the students. It contains 60 items measuring openness, conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness, and neuroticism. The Right Wing Authoritarianism Scale (RWA-ACS) will be administered to the students. It contains 14 items that measure Aggression, Conventionalism, and Submission. These 3 components comprise the essence of the authoritarian personality. The

objective of this research project was to investigate how student's mood and personality predict their political preference/affiliation.

## CHAPTER III

### RESULTS

SAS procedures were employed to conduct a MANOVA comparing political affiliation groups on the B-F and RWAS measures. A significant Wilks'  $\lambda$   $F_{75, 445} = 1.81, p < .0001$  was observed. Significant differences were found for the B-F Openness scale  $\{F_{(5,106)} = 3.52, p < .006\}$  with the Conservative Republicans ( $M = 37.17; SE = 1.32$ ) scoring significantly lower ( $p < .02$ ) on Openness than did the Liberal Democrats ( $M = 42.31; SE = 1.80$ ); the Libertarians ( $p < .03$ ) (Mean 43.29;  $SE = 2.45$ ) and those proclaiming no political affiliation ( $M = 46.61; SE = 1.27$ ) ( $p < .0001$ ). Moderate Republicans ( $M = 38.56; SE = 1.14$ ) were significantly lower ( $p < .004$ ) than those having no political affiliation ( $M = 46.61; SE = 1.27$ ).

Significant effects were also observed for the B-F Agreeableness  $\{F_{(5,106)} = 2.29, p < .05\}$  with the Conservative Republicans ( $M = 46.50; SE = 1.32$ ) scoring significantly higher ( $p < .03$ ) on Agreeableness than did the Libertarians ( $M = 40.00; SE = 2.45$ ). Moderate Republicans ( $M = 47.21; SE = 1.14$ ) were significantly higher ( $p < .03$ ) on the Agreeableness scale than the Liberal Democrats ( $M = 42.61; SE = 1.79$ ).

The RWAS Aggression scale  $\{F_{(5,106)} = 8.95, p < .0001\}$ , the RWAS Conventionalism scale  $\{F_{(5,106)} = 6.54, p < .0001\}$  and the RWAS Submission scale  $\{F_{(5,106)} = 11.62, p < .0001\}$  all proved highly significant. Conservative Republicans ( $M = 13.54; SE = .59$ ) scored significantly ( $p < .03$ ) higher on aggression than did the Moderate Republicans ( $M = 11.81; SE = .51$ ), the Conservative Democrats ( $M = 8.70; SE = .92, p < .0001$ ), the Liberal Democrats ( $M = 8.31; SE = .81, p < .0001$ ),

the Libertarians ( $M= 8.29$ ;  $SE= 1.10$ ,  $p<.02$ ) and those proclaiming no political affiliation ( $M= 10.65$ ;  $SE= .57$ ,  $p<.0007$ ).

Conservative Republicans ( $M= 11.87$ ;  $SE= .80$ ) scored significantly ( $p<.02$ ) lower on RWAS conventionalism than did the Moderate Republicans ( $M= 14.28$ ;  $SE= .69$ ), the Conservative Democrats ( $M= 16.60$ ;  $SE= 1.23$ ,  $p<.002$ ), the Liberal Democrats ( $M= 18.08$ ;  $SE= 1.08$ ,  $p<.0001$ ), the Libertarians ( $M= 15.86$ ;  $SE= 1.48$ ,  $p<.02$ ) and those proclaiming no political affiliation ( $M= 16.93$ ;  $SE= .77$ ,  $p<.0001$ ).

Conservative Republicans ( $M= 27.00$ ;  $SD .72$ ) were significantly more Submissive ( $p<.01$ ) higher than the Moderate Republicans ( $M= 19.59$ ;  $SD= .62$ ,  $p<.01$ ), the Conservative Democrats ( $M= 15.59$ ;  $SD= 1.11$ ,  $p<.0001$ ), the Liberal Democrats ( $M= 27.00$ ;  $SD= .72$ ,  $p<.0001$ ), the Libertarians ( $M= 27.00$ ;  $SD= .72$ ,  $p<.0001$ ), and those proclaiming no political affiliation ( $M= 27.00$ ;  $SD= .72$ ,  $p<.001$ ).

## **CHAPTER IV**

### **CONCLUSION**

After examining the results of the current study and previous research in the area of political psychology, it is fair to assume that our study has been rather exploratory in terms of its foreseen potential and subject matter. To our knowledge, there are no other studies of the kind that examine the relationship between the political preferences of college students and their individual personalities based on the two scales we used (NEO-PI, RWA). As seen in the literature review section of this paper, psychology and politics have been combined together for other types of studies and research. We predict this area of study will continue to increase due to the desire to understand young voters, and all voters in general, to a greater extent so that their participation may be encouraged.

Two other aspects of our literature review section included the introduction of the NEO-PI personality inventory scale and the Right-wing authoritarianism scale. The purpose of the introduction was to provide sufficient definitions and an overall understanding of how the scales work to begin with. The in depth information about previously successful studies using the scales was incorporated to prove the efficiency and reliability of the scales in broad areas of research. If the two scales have been successful in different areas of research such as genetics, social networking, GPA, social dominance and others, then it is pretty fair to assume they will be used appropriately in many other areas of research as well, including ours.



Our results proved to show very interesting and significant results. We found for the B-F Openness scale significant differences as shown our results sections. Overall, the Conservative Republicans scored the lowest on Openness behind Moderate Republicans, Liberal Democrats, Libertarians, and those with no political affiliation scoring the highest on the openness scale. Those with no political affiliation have the highest significant average on openness than all the other political affiliation groups, while Conservative Republicans scored the lowest. This data shows that those who are affiliated with the Conservative Republican group are typically less open to ideas than any other political affiliation we looked at and that those who don't affiliate with a particular group are significantly more open which translates into their personality.

Our data showed there were significant effects observed on the B-F Agreeableness scale. Conservative Republicans scored significantly higher than Libertarians, while Moderate Republicans scored significantly higher than Liberal Democrats. Moderate Republicans scored the highest on Agreeableness followed by Conservative Republicans, Liberal Democrats and lowest being Libertarians. Surprisingly the Moderate republicans and Conservative Republicans scored higher on Agreeableness than the other groups. This goes against the idea of a traditional personality type that is associated with the Republican groups. Typically the Democrat affiliates are seen as being more agreeable in terms of the definition provided by the B-F scale. There could be a number of reasons why the Republican affiliates ended up scoring higher than the other groups.

The data from the RWA Aggression scale proved to be highly significant. The Conservative Republicans scored significantly higher on the aggression scale followed by Moderate Republicans, no political affiliation, Conservative Democrats, Liberal Democrats and Libertarians scoring the lowest on aggression. These results follow the typical personality type associated with these political groups. Republicans are seen as more aggressive in their personality, which is expressed through the policy and agendas they support. There is a significant difference between the average score from the Republicans to the Democrats, Libertarians and no political affiliation. This difference between the two Republican groups and the other four groups is to be expected.

The RWA Conventionalism scale data also proved to be highly significant. The Conservative Republicans scored significantly lower on conventionalism behind Moderate Republicans, Libertarians, Conservative Democrats, no political affiliation, and Liberal Democrats scoring the highest on conventionalism. This is a surprising result from the data as the typical personality type for democrats is untraditional while the republicans are more traditional and enforce the societal norms. One of the possible reasons for these results is due to the fact that our sample was pooled from a highly conservative university. Texas A&M is encompassed with traditions and consistency to norms. Our student body takes great pride in keeping to these traditions and embodying the values that are at the core of our university and community.

Lastly, the data from the RWA submissive scale proved highly significant. Conservative Republicans scored significantly higher on submission, followed by Libertarians, no political affiliation, Liberal Democrats, Moderate Republicans and Conservative Democrats scoring the lowest on the submission scale. It is understandable that Conservative Republicans scored the highest on the submission scale as that group shows a high degree of submissiveness to the authorities who are perceived to be established and legitimate in the society in which one lives. We expected the Conservative Republicans to score high on the submissive scale, as their political group heavily supports policies that keep our society traditional and normative.

Our significant results proved very interesting results that can be interpreted and applied in various ways that would prove enlightening in political psychology literature.

Some limitations of this research are due to particular demographics that our participants possess. The participants involved in this study were all students within the Psychology department at Texas A&M University. This was most likely not one of the more diverse majors to draw a sample from. In addition, the university is located in the South where Conservatism is the dominant ideology. More specifically, the university itself is known to be amongst the top five Conservative schools in the country. Furthermore, there was an unequal distribution of male and female subjects, which could potentially be another limitation due to differences in gender preferences. Lastly, the participants were all selected within classes taught by the same professor, who advises more than one group of researchers a year. Due to this, some students may have

been participants in some of his other studies as well, which could have caused some potential carry-over effects. For future studies similar to ours, one might collect data from a more diverse sample size and one, which has a more even distribution between males and females. Subjects could be randomly selected from multiple departments as opposed to only one. Future implications might also include drawing a sample from a university that is known for a different political view and possibly in a geographic location that holds views that contrast from those of the South's. This could allow for future data to be compared to ours and would most likely result in overall, more diverse results. For future research that will build off of this study, the researcher could ask subjects to state if they are pro-life or pro-choice, if they support LGBT rights, and any other classifications that would help to pair certain political affiliations with controversial topics.

In conclusion, we expect that our study can be used as a model for future studies to identify and pinpoint personality characteristics and patterns that are typical of geographical locations as well as specific universities. In identifying the personality characteristics of those populating a given location it is expected that politicians can gain a better understanding of how to campaign to an unfamiliar population. It is our hope that by classifying the personality characteristics of the population of a specific university that campaigns can be structured to pertain to younger voters, eventually resulting in an increase of young voter participation. The exploratory basis of our study and generally unexplored realm of the topic of interest allowed for a unique opportunity to generate unprecedented information. We hope that this will be a step in the right direction to increase young voter participation.

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